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Note verbale dated 3 April 2001 from the Permanent Mission of Kenya to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General and has the honour to transmit the statement and programme of action emanating from the African High-level Regional Meeting on Energy and Sustainable Development, which was hosted by the Government of Kenya and organized jointly by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations Environment Programme, and was held in Nairobi from 10 to 13 January 2001 (see annex).

Considering the importance of the meeting as one of the regional high-level activities held in preparation for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Mission requests that this letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the Commission.

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Annex to the letter dated 3 April 2001 from the Permanent Mission of Kenya to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

STATEMENT AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION EMANATING FROM THE AFRICAN HIGH-LEVEL REGIONAL MEETING ON ENERGY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

I. STATEMENT

AFRICAN REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON ENERGY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE NINTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN APRIL 2001

PREAMBLE

We, Ministers responsible for energy and their representatives of United Nations Member States of Africa*, convened for the African High-level Regional Meeting on Energy for Sustainable Development, in Nairobi, Kenya, from 10 to13 January 2001,

Considering Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/60 of 30 July 1999 on preparations for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, on energy issues, in which the Council called upon Governments to actively participate and contribute to the preparatory process, and to the first session of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development, held in New York in March 2000,

Considering also that the African region attaches great importance the attainment of positive outcomes at the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which would review and assess the issues relating to the role of energy in achieving sustainable development in the context of implementing Agenda 21, and is committed to contributing actively to the discussions at that session,

Considering further that adequate basic energy infrastructures, including that for production, distribution and consumption, as well as institutions, are not yet in place in most African countries and that data required for informed policy formulation and implementation are lacking, despite the fact that different forums have made major pronouncements on these matters,

Considering also that poverty and specifically energy poverty is a major impediment to development and that sustainability of development cannot be achieved because of this critical situation of poverty,

Considering further that the accelerated growth of commercial energy consumption is a prerequisite for the economic and social development of African countries,

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* See appendix.

Recalling the importance attached by African heads of State to the critical role of energy for development in the Lagos Plan of Action of 1980, and thereafter reiterated on various occasions, including in the Cairo Agenda for Action adopted in June 1995, and the Abuja Declaration in April 2000,

Recalling also the resolutions of the Organization of African Unity forums on energy, and specifically those adopted at the First Pan African Energy Ministers' Conference held in Tunis in 1995, those of the First and Second Regional Conferences of African Ministers Responsible for the Development and Utilization of Mineral and Energy Resources held in Accra in 1995 and Durban in 1997, respectively, and several other regional and subregional ministers' and experts' meetings,

Recalling further the decision of the United Nations General Assembly at its nineteenth special session on the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (resolution S-19/2), identifying energy as an area of widespread concern and stating that sustainable patterns of energy production, distribution and use are crucial to improving the quality of life of people,

Recognizing the limited access of the majority of the African population to energy services for their basic needs and the severe energy supply shortages in many African countries, which have constrained development efforts for many years in spite of the availability of enormous energy resources on the continent,

Recognizing also the needs in the continent for financial resources, capacity-building and technology transfer in order to provide access to energy services to the vast majority of the population, which in the past have not been adequately addressed,

Recognizing the global need to reduce greenhouse gases emissions caused by the use of fossil fuels,

Recognizing also principle 7 of Agenda 21 on common but differentiated responsibilities,

Noting that, despite the common interests and concerns among African countries with due consideration to energy and sustainable development needs, and the crucial role of energy in achieving sustainable development objectives, including poverty alleviation, energy for sustainable development has not received high priority because of other pressing development needs,

We address the following to the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development through which we appeal for due consideration of the energy and sustainable needs and priorities of our region.

General

1. We seek to strengthen long-term capacity-building in human resources and institutions for the formulation, monitoring, assessment and development of appropriate policies, and to secure adequate supplies of energy in the context of sustainable development.

2. While energy policy actions for sustainable development are primarily a concern of national Governments, a participatory approach, involving all relevant stakeholders, may facilitate and enhance progress to this end. In this context, energy management, policy and planning should be an interactive exercise aimed at helping promote awareness of the need for the development and use of energy. In addition, access to and the transfer of environmentally sound technology and the corresponding know-how are required.

3. In Africa, energy for sustainable development depends mostly on addressing several key issues to improve energy supply and end use. Among these are: increased access to energy for the majority of the population, urban and rural; increased development and utilization of renewable sources of energy; increased attention to energy problems in rural areas; increased transfer of technology; additional and adequate financing mechanisms; increased capacity-building; mobilization of financial resources; international cooperation; consideration of advanced fossil fuel technologies, given the expected and continuing reliance on fossil fuels in the future; and concerted actions for subregional and regional cooperation.

Improving access to energy for sustainable development

4. Improving access to energy implies finding ways and means by which energy services can be delivered in a reliable, affordable, environmentally sound and socially acceptable manner, in urban and rural areas. This is conditioned by security of supply, which is enhanced by diversifying the sources of supply to consumers, improving energy efficiency, promoting energy substitution, and developing cross-border subregional cooperation.

5. In most African countries, biomass resources still have the largest share of energy consumption. We believe that actions in the field of energy for sustainable development should focus on the following issues: improving the production and consumption of biomass, promoting a progressive shift to other energy sources especially renewable energy, and supporting the development as well as promotion of energy services based on grid extensions and/or decentralized energy technologies.

6. All sources of energy should be included as supply options, taking into account local economic, social and environmental considerations.

7. We therefore intend to formulate policies and develop actions and programmes jointly with all other stakeholders in order to improve access to energy services for the majority of Africans in a sustainable manner.

Rural energy

8. The challenge of improving rural energy supply centres on the following issues: (a) improving access of the rural population to commercial energy, such as liquid and gaseous fuels, for basic needs as well as for income-generating activities (b) promoting diverse options for rural electrification, including decentralized systems, and developing and promoting innovative financing mechanisms for such energy systems; and (c) improving service and maintenance skills.

9. Actions are therefore needed to integrate energy policies into overall rural development strategies with an emphasis on income generation, taking into account the need to develop gender-sensitive frameworks and to integrate energy supply and consumption into overall national development plans.

10. We believe that providing access by the poor to modern affordable energy services can play an important role in creating income-generating activities and, therefore, can contribute to alleviating poverty.

11. We are committed to the introduction and promotion of innovative financing schemes in rural areas, such as micro-financing and cooperative arrangements and credit and licensing agreements, in order to encourage the involvement of the private sector in providing energy services in rural areas.

12. These financing schemes should adequately address the needs of low-income people by establishing either easy credit terms or subsidies whenever it is possible to improve their access to the necessary forms of energy.

13. Since similar conditions prevail with regard to rural energy in many countries, much can be gained from cooperation at the subregional and regional levels, by exchanging information and experience on rural energy programmes.

14. At the international level, actions can be developed based on the experience gained in international cooperation programmes promoting rural electrification by the use of new and innovative approaches, such as solar home systems, wind, micro and mini hydropower, and biomass-based rural power schemes for agriculture and rural industries.

15. We therefore appeal for the setting up of international assistance programmes in order to develop rural energy for income generation and social improvement, particularly in the least developed African countries.

Renewable sources of energy

16. Africa has substantial renewable energy sources that could be harnessed to meet specific needs in the energy sector. A number of issues need to be addressed such as financing schemes, technical appraisal and testing, technology transfer and job creation and product manufacturing.

17. Despite efforts devoted in the region to promote its development, commercial renewable energy still makes only a minor contribution to national energy mixes. One of the main challenges confronting renewable energy development and utilization in Africa is the low priority given to it in national energy planning and policies in many countries of the region.

18. Renewable energy can play an important role in helping to meet basic energy needs in peri-urban zones and in rural areas, through the use of modern technologies. These can help to provide alternative sources of energy for some specific needs, for example, hot water production, using solar heaters, and small-scale agro-processing industries.

19. We are committed to formulating policies for promoting the use of renewable energy sources, to integrating renewable energy development in national energy planning and policies, and developing actions for the exploitation of renewable energy resources and for progressively expanding their share of the energy supply mix.

Energy efficiency and conservation

20. Since improving energy conversion and end-use efficiency can lead to a reduction of energy consumption per unit product or activity, that approach provides a compelling basis for policy initiatives and actions. Making the energy system more efficient contributes to air quality improvement and a reduction of health hazards as well as regional acidification. Energy efficiency improvements also reduce the investment requirements of the energy sector for any given level of gross domestic product.

21. The capacity to undertake the full range of actions on energy efficiency requires national and regional commitment to strengthen existing institutions engaged in energy efficiency activities or to establishing new ones and providing training for this purpose. African countries will need, in addition to their own efforts, beginning with awareness campaigns and establishing information resources, assistance from the international community to strengthen their institutional and human resources capacities.

22. We believe that while in the short and medium terms, assistance may be in the form of information, including good practices, demand-side management and training, in the longer term, the transfer of relevant technologies will be of crucial importance. Appropriate economic and institutional reforms will be required in African countries to encourage private-sector involvement so as to attract investment in more efficient energy technologies.

Advanced and cleaner fossil fuel technologies

23. A large number of African nations are endowed with coal, oil and natural gas resources. In some cases, these have been developed and are in use in some countries. Fossil fuels are expected to continue to play a significant role in our energy supply systems. However, they contribute to emissions of gaseous and particulate matter. African countries could utilize cleaner fossil fuel technologies to meet their sustainable development needs.

24. We will seek the development and the utilization of natural gas in those countries where viable commercial projects can be undertaken. Consequently, we call for exploration and development initiatives for natural gas as well as for other fossil fuels, in our region, that can be developed and sustained through a designated financial fund.

25. We therefore recognize the necessity of deploying appropriate advanced and cleaner fossil fuel technologies in order to increase the use of fossil fuels and reduce their negative environmental impacts. We believe that actions are needed to transfer such technologies to developing countries, with special provisions for the least developed countries, and to strengthen our capacity-building for the acquisition of know-how and expertise.

26. We therefore appeal to the donor community to support these efforts; we also believe that South-South cooperation can contribute to the sharing of experience of the successful implementation of cleaner energy assistance programmes.

Technology transfer

27. A major area of concern in the region is the low level of technological capabilities in the energy sector. In order to implement energy programmes for substantial development, access to and transfer of environmentally sound technologies, as well as development of indigenous capacity to absorb and modify

such know-how, are very important. Existing available local expertise should be mobilized by involving them in design planning, and construction of energy projects in the region so that they can "learn by doing".

28. We urge our partners in developed countries to facilitate and finance technology transfer and capacity building on favourable terms, in line with the commitments they undertook at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992.

Capacity building

29. In view of their pivotal role in addressing the issues of energy and sustainable development, we urge international organizations to assist and facilitate international programmes on capacity-building, policy development on energy and environment, power sector reform programmes, legislative reviews and the establishment of independent regulatory bodies.

30. We therefore declare our political goodwill to work with international organizations in facilitating these reforms.

Mobilization of financial resources

31. Most African countries are well endowed with energy resources; however, the infrastructure for intra-African trade in energy and for the production, transformation, transport, distribution and efficient utilization of energy is still lacking. Substantial efforts have been made in the past to develop and improve the energy infrastructure, but much remains to be done in order to provide energy services to the majority of people. The existing debt burden of most African countries is making it difficult for them to finance the required energy infrastructure; therefore, there is a need to accelerate debt relief.

32. Many African countries have been implementing macro-economic reforms, with mixed results. Some of those reforms have led to the creation of a market-based and competitive energy industry. Economic-efficiency-based energy pricing, taking into consideration equity criteria, competition and institutional and regulatory frameworks, is useful in designing energy strategies for sustainable development.

33. We therefore believe that there is a need to develop new and improved institutional frameworks and financing mechanisms, to provide a new impulse to energy for sustainable development in Africa.

34. We appeal to the international community to support Africa's quest for secure and adequate energy supplies and to facilitate and finance capacity-building and technology transfer as stated in Agenda 21, through new initiatives, based on partnerships built on the principles of full equity, mutual respect and

mutual benefit. We urge developed countries to renew the commitment they made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, June 1992), in regard to official development assistance and technology transfer.

Regional cooperation

35. Subregional and regional cooperation can be among the main levers of action to help African nations meet the challenges of energy sustainability.

36. Access to energy and rural energy issues can be successfully tackled by developing cross-border energy exchanges between African countries, mainly by promoting interconnection of electricity grids, and by developing cross-border natural gas and petroleum product pipelines and hydropower infrastructure. Regional cooperation can enhance energy security for our countries.

37. Within a regional cooperation framework, we can establish mechanisms for the exchange of information and experiences, that can support appropriate actions for renewable energy development in our countries, in order to meet some of our energy needs.

38. We are therefore committed to developing concerted actions to optimize and rationalize the utilization of existing energy facilities, identifying the required infrastructure, and to strengthening existing institutional frameworks to catalyse this cooperation. This would ensure the coherence of our future energy investments.

International cooperation

39. We consider that there is a need for assistance to implement the activities of the proposed African Energy Commission, so as to harmonize activities in the subregions of Africa, as well as those of the OAU Committee on industry, science and technology, energy, natural resources and environment.

40. We recognize the importance of bilateral and extended subregional cooperation for the purpose of energy sustainability in our countries. We, therefore, call on the international community to develop relevant assistance programmes in this regard.

41. In the achievement of all the objectives outlined in this declaration, we are committed to optimizing the utilization of regional resources.

42. The African region has been shown by recent scientific findings to be one of those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and with limited resources for adaptation and mitigation. In addition,

many countries in the region continue to be affected by desertification. Plans for improvements in the energy sector for the region need to take those realities into consideration.

43. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on "Energy and sustainable development: options and strategies for action on key issues" (E/CN.17/2001/2) as providing a useful basis for the discussion on the formulation of a programme of action.

Note of appreciation

44. We extend our appreciation to the Government of Kenya for hosting this meeting and the Governments of Denmark and Sweden for their contributions. We also appreciate the efforts made by the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in convening this meeting, and urge the relevant arms of the United Nations to continue to take appropriate action to enhance dialogue and promote policy actions on energy, environment and sustainable development.

II. PROGRAMME OF ACTION

In the light of the above statement on energy and sustainable development, we wish support to do the following.

(a) Accelerate the establishment of the African Energy Commission, the objectives of which should include the promotion and coordination of regional energy sector development planning and project implementation, in cooperation with subregional groupings;

(b) Promote energy efficiency and conservation, including energy substitution;

(c) Promote the development and dissemination of renewable energy technologies for the household and productive sectors;

(d) Enhance energy integration, collective self-reliance, security and reliability of energy supply among member States;

(e) Promote policy dialogue on appropriate energy policies and strategies;

(f) Establish of revolving funds and other financing mechanisms for the implementation of energy projects;

(g) Establish, develop and update a regional energy database, and promote and facilitate the exchange and dissemination of information between member States, as well as with the regional economic communities and organizations;

(h) Encourage the harmonization of energy standards and procedures;

(i) Undertake the harmonization and the rationalization of energy development projects at sub-regional levels;

(j) Promote the development of cross-border energy trade through the identification of technical and non-technical barriers and the elaboration of appropriate remedies and solutions;

(k) Facilitate development of ongoing and future initiatives on inter-State and subregional energy development projects;

(l) Promote an extensive survey of energy resources, and the elaboration of updated energy maps of the continent;

(m) Promote and encourage research and development in the energy sector; in that regard, evaluate how the development capacity in national and regional institutions could be enhanced or reshaped to meet current needs;

(n) Promote a survey of existing human capacity-building in energy policy formulation and energy planning, in order to determine the need for establishing common ground for a progressive energy dialogue and cooperation;

(o) Promote among member States the adoption and implementation of effective measures and standards and the adoption of clean energy technologies for environmental protection in the energy sector;

(p) Enhance and harmonize the activities of subregional groupings in order for them to advance the regional agenda on energy for sustainable development;

(q) Promote a dedicated financial mechanism for intensive exploration for and development of natural gas as a clean fossil fuel;

(r) Facilitate the development of regulatory frameworks that allow for a transition into privatization and commercialization.;

(s) Encourage the elaboration of bilateral and subregional cooperation programmes in the energy sector;

(t) Develop and promote links between the energy and income-generating sectors;

(u) Strengthen the capacity of community-based organizations and institutions, including women's groups, to facilitate participatory approaches to energy for sustainable development.

Appendix

List of United Nations Member States represented at the high-level segment of the African High-level Regional Meeting on Energy and Sustainable Development, 12-13 January 2001

Algeria
Angola
Botswana
Burundi*
Congo
Egypt
Equatorial Guinea*
Eritrea
Kenya*
Malawi
Mali
Mauritania
Morocco
Mozambique
Namibia*
Niger
Rwanda
Senegal
South Africa
Sudan
Swaziland*
Togo
Uganda*
United Republic of Tanzania*
Zambia

* Represented at the ministerial level.